

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9727

S E C R E T LONDON 04799

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, XF, UK

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CALLAGHAN VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST

1. DURING A CONVERSATION ON MARCH 27, MICHAEL WEIR REFERRED TO THE IDEA WHICH FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN HAD MENTIONED TO THE SECRETARY ON MARCH 23 NAMELY THAT HE (CALLAGHAN) MIGHT MAKE A SWING THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE NEXT WEEK OR TEN DAYS "TO TAKE THE TEMPERATURE." WEIR SAID HE WAS TRYING TO DISCOURAGE CALLAGHAN FROM MAKING SUCH A TRIP AT THIS TIME. HE GAVE SEVERAL REASONS FOR HIS OWN BEARISH ATTITUDE: THE US IS IN THE PROCESS OF REASSESSING ITS OWN MIDDLE EAST POLICY; THE BRITISH HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER IN THE WAKE OF THE FAILURE OF THE SECRETARY'S RECENT EFFORTS; IT WOULD NOT APPEAR TO BE USEFUL FOR THE BRITISH TO CANVASS MIDDLE EAST OPINION BEFORE A DATE HAS BEEN SET FOR RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE.

2. WEIR NOTED THAT CALLAGHAN FEELS UNDER SOME DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURE FROM THE CONSERVATIVES TO TAKE A HAND IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE, AND FURTHER THAT CALLAGHAN WOULD SINCERELY LIKE TO MAKE SOME KIND OF CONTRIBUTION IF POSSIBLE. WEIR CONTINUED THAT IF AND WHEN A DATE IS SET FOR A RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE CALLAGHAN MIGHT USEFULLY SOUND OUT OPINION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HOWEVER, WEIR POINTED OUT THAT IF THE BRITISH WERE NOT INVITED TO PARTICIPATE AT GENEVA, IT WOULD BE

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QUESTIONABLE WHETHER CALLAGHAN SHOULD TAKE ON SUCH A

ROLE. IN THIS CONNECTION, WEIR SAID THAT THE FRENCH, WITH WHOM THE BRITISH HAD THEIR PERIODIC CONSULTATIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST MARCH 26 WERE TAKING A RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA. DE COMMINES SAID THAT THE FRENCH WERE NOT PRESSING TO BE INCLUDED BUT THAT IF THE ARABS URGED THE FRENCH TO ATTEND THE FRENCH WOULD ENTERTAIN THE IDEA. WEIR ADDED THAT THE BRITISH FEEL THE SAME WAY, AND HE FOR ONE IS STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF A LOW BRITISH PROFILE.

3. DEPARTMENT PASS AS DESIRED.

RICHARDSON

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NNN

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